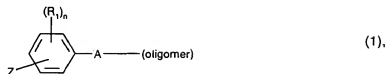


Claims:

1. A compound of formula



wherein R_1 is an electron-withdrawing substituent and n is an integer from 0 to 2,
 Z is a group which functions as a triggerable precursor for carbene or nitrene formation,
 A is a radical of formula

$-\text{C}(\text{O})-\text{X}-$ (2a) or

$-\text{X}-\text{C}(\text{O})-$ (2b); or

$-\text{X}_1-\text{C}(\text{O})-\text{X}-$ (2c); or

$-\text{X}_1-\text{C}(\text{S})-\text{X}-$ (2d); or

$-\text{A}_1-\text{C}(\text{O})-\text{X}-$ (2e); or

$-\text{X}_1-\text{C}(\text{O})-\text{NH}-\text{R}-\text{NH}-\text{C}(\text{O})-\text{X}-$ (2f); or

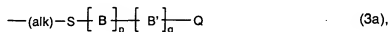
$-\text{X}_1-\text{C}(\text{O})-\text{R}-\text{C}(\text{O})-\text{X}-$ (2g);

X and X_1 are each independently of the other a group $-\text{O}-$ or $-\text{NR}_2-$, wherein R_2 is hydrogen or C_1-C_4 -alkyl;

A_1 is C_2-C_{30} -alkyl which may be interrupted by $-\text{O}-$;

R is linear or branched C_1-C_{18} -alkylene or unsubstituted or C_1-C_4 -alkyl- or C_1-C_4 -alkoxy-substituted C_6-C_{10} -arylene, C_7-C_{18} -aralkylene, C_6-C_{10} -arylene- C_1-C_2 -alkylene- C_6-C_{10} -arylene, C_3-C_8 -cycloalkylene, C_3-C_8 -cycloalkylene- C_1-C_6 -alkylene, C_3-C_8 -cycloalkylene- C_1-C_2 -alkylene- C_3-C_8 -cycloalkylene or C_1-C_6 -alkylene- C_3-C_8 -cycloalkylene- C_1-C_6 -alkylene; and (oligomer) is

(i) the radical of a telomer of formula

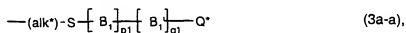


wherein (alk) is C_2-C_{12} -alkylene,

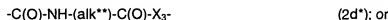
Q is a monovalent group that is suitable to act as a polymerization chain-reaction terminator,

p and q are each independently of another an integer from 0 to 750, wherein the total of $(p+q)$ is an integer from 2 to 750,

and B and B' are each independently of the other a 1,2-ethylene radical derivable from a copolymerizable vinyl monomer by replacing the vinylic double bond by a single bond, at least one of the radicals B and B' being substituted by a hydrophilic substituent; or
(i-i) the radical of a telomer of formula



wherein (alk*) Q*, p1 and q1 each independently have the meaning of (alk), Q, p and q, B₁ is a 1,2-ethylene radical derivable from a copolymerizable vinyl monomer by replacing the vinylic double bond by a single bond, which is substituted by a radical -T-(oligomer¹), wherein (oligomer¹) independently is a radical of formula (3a) above and T is a direct bond or a radical of formula



T₁ is -O-C₂-C₁₂-alkylene which is unsubstituted or substituted by hydroxy, or is -O-C₂-C₁₂-alkylene-NH-C(O)- or -O-C₂-C₁₂-alkylene-O-C(O)-NH-R₁₃-NH-C(O)-, wherein R₁₃ independently has the meaning of R above;

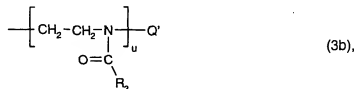
T₂ is C₁-C₈-alkylene; phenylene or benzylene;

X₃ and X₄ are each independently of the other a bivalent group -O- or -NR₂', wherein R₂' is hydrogen or C₁-C₆-alkyl;

(alk**) is C₁-C₆-alkylene and (alk***) is C₂-C₁₂-alkylene, and m and x are each independently of the other the number 0 or 1; and

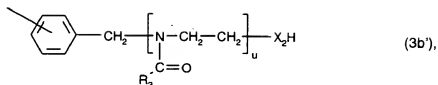
B₁' independently has the meaning of B₁ or B; or

(ii) the radical of an oligomer of the formula



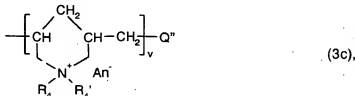
wherein R₃ is hydrogen or unsubstituted or hydroxy-substituted C₁-C₁₂-alkyl, u is an integer from 2 to 750 and Q' is a radical of a polymerization initiator; or

(iii) the radical of formula



wherein X_2 independently has the meaning of X above, and R_3 and u are as defined above, or

(iv) the radical of an oligomer of formula



wherein R_4 and R_4' are each independently C_1 - C_4 -alkyl, An^- is an anion, v is an integer from 2 to 750, and Q'' is a monovalent group that is suitable to act as a polymerization chain-reaction terminator;

subject to the proviso that A is not a radical of formula (2b) if (oligomer) is a radical of formula (3b) or (3c).

2. A compound according to claim 1, wherein Z is a group of formula



wherein R_2 is fluorinated C_1 - C_6 -alkyl.

3. A compound according to claim 1, wherein Z is a group , n is 0, and A is a

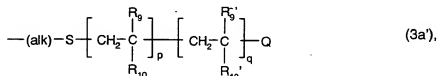
radical of formula (2a).

4. A compound according to claim 1, wherein Z is a group $-\text{N}_3$, n is 0 or 1, and A is a radical of formula (2b), (2d) or (2e).

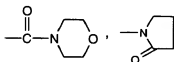
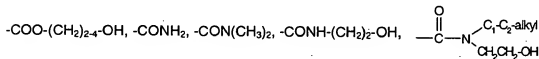
5. A compound according to claim 1, wherein (oligomer) is a telomer radical of formula (3a).

6. A compound according to claim 5, wherein the hydrophilic substituent of the radicals B and B' is selected from a radical -COOY, wherein Y is C₁-C₂-alkyl, C₂-C₃-alkyl, which is substituted by hydroxy, amino or N,N-di-C₁-C₂-alkylamino, or is a radical -C₂-C₄-alkylene-NH-C(O)-O-G wherein -O-G is the radical of trehalose or a cyclodextrin fragment with a maximum of 8 sugar units; a radical -CO-NY₁Y₂, wherein Y₁ and Y₂ are each independently of the other hydrogen, C₁-C₂-alkyl or C₁-C₄-alkyl which is substituted by hydroxy, or Y₁ and Y₂ together with the adjacent N-atom form a N-C₁-C₂-alkylpiperazino or morpholino ring; and a heterocyclic radical selected from the group consisting of N-pyrrolidonyl, 2- or 4-pyridinyl, 2-methylpyridin-5-yl, 2-, 3- or 4-hydroxypyridinyl, N-ε-caprolactamyl, N-imidazolyl, 2-methylimidazol-1-yl, N-morpholinyl and 4-N-methylpiperazin-1-yl.

7. A compound according to claim 1, wherein (oligomer) is a radical of formula



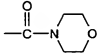

wherein (alk) is C₂-C₄-alkylene, R₉ and R₉' are each independently of the other hydrogen or methyl, Q is a monovalent group that is suitable to act as a polymerization chain-reaction terminator, R₁₀ and R₁₀' are each independently of the other -COO-C₁-C₂-alkyl,



or -COO(CH₂)₂₋₄-NHC(O)-O-G wherein -O-G is the radical of

trehalose or a cyclodextrin fragment with a maximum of 8 sugar units, and p and q are each independently of another an integer from 0 to 750, wherein the total of (p+q) is an integer from 2 to 750.

8. A compound according to claim 7, wherein p is an integer from 10 to 750, q is 0, and R_{10}

is $-\text{COO}-(\text{CH}_2)_{2-4}-\text{OH}$, $-\text{CONH}_2$, $-\text{CON}(\text{CH}_3)_2$, , or .

9. A composite material comprising

(a) an inorganic or organic bulk material; and

(b) a hydrophilic surface coating obtainable by applying one or more different compounds of the formula (1) according to any one of claims 1 to 8 to the bulk material surface.

10. A composite material according to claim 9, wherein the inorganic or organic bulk material is a biomedical device, particularly a contact lens, intraocular lens or artificial cornea.

11. A composite material according to claim 9, wherein the hydrophilic surface coating according to step (b) is obtainable by applying the compound(s) of formula (1) to the bulk material surface and fixing said compound(s) of formula (1) onto the bulk material using radiation, in particular UV or visible light.

12. A process for the manufacture of a composite material, comprising the steps:

(a) providing an inorganic or organic bulk material;

(b) applying one or more different compounds of the formula (1) according to claim 1 to the bulk material surface; and

(c) fixing the compound(s) of the formula (1) onto the bulk material surface using radiation, in particular UV or visible light.

13. A process according to claim 12, wherein the inorganic or organic bulk material is a biomedical device, particularly a contact lens, intraocular lens or artificial cornea.

14. A process for modifying the surface of a biomedical article, which comprises applying a compound of formula (1) according to claim 1 to the surface.